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January 26, 2005

VIA e-mail to Federal Communications Commission

Reply to Comments on BellSouth petition asking FCC to stop regulating broadband service.

I am writing to ask you to continue regulating broadband service, because I fear that if you do not then my choice of providers will ultimately shrink to one, a company I left because of poor and expensive service.

I am an Enrolled Agent with a busy tax practice at the above location. I employ five part-time people, two of them professionals who work full time during tax season. From January of 2000 until the middle of last year my office had DSL service from what was Pacific Bell but is now SBC. We had periodic problems with DSL, but the service was mostly satisfactory until SBC outsourced their technical support to India. During February 2004, and on into March 2004 I had terrible problems with my e-mail which necessitated many long phone calls to SBC tech support. The operators were poorly trained and not as knowledgeable as they should have been. All calls took longer than they should have, and it took many weeks to get my e-mail completely working. Often the operators would give answers that were not related to the question I was asking, and would refuse to switch me to someone else. For the few weeks that my e-mail did not work at all I was very embarrassed as my practice depends on e-mail communication with clients. This was all very frustrating.

After tax season was over we switched the office internet connection to DSL through a small company in Santa Rosa, California that is cheaper than SBC was and provides better technical support. I also switched my home computer, which I mostly use for business, from AOL dial-up to sonic.net DSL.

Many large companies are outsourcing telephone support service to other countries, and much of the time this is not helpful to the consumer. The workers are not well enough trained and do not have enough experience to do the job. I am also very concerned about workers in other countries possibly having access to my clients' private information. California has very strict privacy rules, and my profession demands that we guard the information carefully. I want to be able to deal with California companies to have an extra level of security in that regard, or at least companies in the United States. Once access to the clients' information leaves the United States there is no legal recourse is someone violates a clients' privacy.

I have read that Bellsouth claims that they have such a huge majority of their market that it won't matter to consumers if the rest of their competition is squashed. I find this extremely offensive, plus very dangerous for the consumer. With no competition and no regulation the company can do whatever it wants – raise prices, provide bad service, put off maintenance, outsource the work at the expense of U.S. jobs – you name it. Don't we have anti-trust rules to guard against this? Isn't this part of the reason they broke up AT&T into the "baby bells" years ago?

My fear is that if you stop regulating broad band services consumers will be limited to one large company to provide their broad band service. If that happens prices will go up, service will go down, I will have no choice as to who has access to my clients' information, and excellent companies like sonic.net in Santa Rosa, California, will be forced out of business.

Please continue regulating broadband services. Thank you for your attention.

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